

FORUM

kirtlandcc.forum@kirtland.af.mil, 846-4240



COL. KATHIE CLOSE
377th Air Base Wing commander

Bump needs repaired

Can something be done about the bump approaching the Manzano bridge while driving east

on the road to the base golf course? It almost causes me to lose control of my vehicle.

A contractor is currently working on the bump and the shoulder of the road approaching the bridge. Please drive carefully through the construction area.

Speeding a problem throughout base

I am concerned about speeding on Pennsylvania Avenue through the housing area. I would estimate the average speed on this street as being in excess of 30 mph.

As a jogger I find it very dangerous to run on this base. On Friday morning an Air Force lieutenant and I were passed by a speeding truck whose windows were so fogged up the driver was leaning his head out to see.

I have seen drivers swerve around people riding with their children, mothers jogging with their strollers and runners such as

myself. I have served now for 10 years and I have never seen anything like this before. All of my attempts to resolve this through the police have failed and I leave this issue to your best judgment.

Thank you for your concern about the safety of pedestrians and joggers.

Excessive speed is an issue throughout Kirtland AFB. Patrols establish speed checks numerous times daily at various locations around the base and it's amazing the number of people who continue to exceed the speed limits as evidenced by the number of speeding tickets written each day.

Security Forces conducted increased enforcement in the area you are concerned about and issued seven speeding tickets in the week following your call, nearly all to residents living in your neighborhood.

If you have future problems about speeding and traffic problems, please contact Master Sgt. Deborah

J. Burdette, the law enforcement superintendent, at 846-0639 or 846-0309 as soon as possible.

Contacting Forum

We want your suggestions and comments concerning Kirtland AFB. Give base agencies or the chain of command the chance to resolve your concern before calling Forum. Callers' names won't be printed. Write: 377th ABW/CC Forum
2000 Wyoming SE
Kirtland AFB NM 87117.

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SPOUSES:

We are proud, for we learn that we are the backbone of the military

BY KATHERINE L. WEBER

377th Contracting Squadron

Note: I originally wrote this story in 1994 and it was published in Kirtland AFB newspaper, the Focus.

The airport seemed extra cold that day. Many military spouses were waiting for the airplane to take off. In the silence, you heard their sobs. I remember thinking that I would not cry or be upset. After leaving the airport, I thought I knew where I was going.

Suddenly, I "woke up" and realized that I didn't know where I was. I was in a parking lot in front of a strange grocery store. My son looked up and said, "Mom, are you upset?"

Many military spouses have had this same reaction. What am I going to do with a year by myself? Some of us have been separated for months or years at a time throughout our spouses' military careers. There will always be negative psychological reactions from being left alone. As one military wife told me, "Everything will break down." I wondered if she meant physically or emotionally.

The first few weeks for me seemed like an eternity because suddenly I did not have anyone to talk to. My cat, after the sixth week, seemed very intelligent because he was always willing to listen, but did not understand. I decided it was not a good idea to talk to my 6-year old because she was very upset with her dad being gone.

Like every military spouse, I had my share of things breaking down and other bad luck. My car broke down four times in one month—it was so bad AAA sent me a first aid kit. My water heater leaked—after the maintenance man fixed it he said there was a little reserve water—I didn't

think he meant a flood. My roof leaked and now they are replacing the roof—we came home to the smell of tar. They decided that I was the lucky house for a water pump replacement.

My son called and said, "Mom, they are tearing up the front lawn." A few minutes later he called and said, "Mom, they are tearing up our driveway."

In addition, my husband's aunt died, his twin brother found out he had MS, his sister-in-law found out she had some sort of blood disorder, my aunt had a heart attack, sick kids and of course, I came down with the flu. On top of that, we are only halfway through the tour.

Many military spouses, like myself, probably feel that "we don't get enough credit on the outside for this." The world outside the military does not understand. They think every time they pass a military installation that we are protected because the government is paying for our housing and gives us "free" health care. These are only physical conditions, but what about the emotional conditions?

At this point, you would think most of us would want to run away. I have felt this many times when things started happening. Think about it. When you married, they said "till death do us part." Nowhere did it mention a remote tour. However, there are positive lessons I have learned that I feel are worthwhile mentioning.

Ten years ago I would not have been able to handle any of these things. Now, after the second disaster, I have learned patience. There is nothing in this world that can overcome me, not even my broken down car. There is always a solution around the corner. I used to be so panicky about situations like this. Now if I get 10 bad things in one week I've learned to handle them one at a time

It used to be that I was very dependent on my spouse to discipline our children. This was definitely scary when he left. Suddenly I had to be both mom and dad. I learned, yes, I can do it without feeling guilty.

The value of friendships has never been so important to me in my life. I have basically had to learn how to make friends—I have always had my spouse and no one else to share with. This, at first, was scary because someone else was learning about me. What a blessing friends are and this is a positive effect that will always remain with me.

During my disasters, I found out the value of co-workers and supervisors. These people have been there for me and they have become my counselors.

Keeping busy is the biggest lesson I learned. If you are idle, there is more time to think. Thinking is hazardous because the word "loneliness" grabs your heart. Even if you have children "loneliness" can be a downer that takes hours to get over. This may mean crying in your shower.

Finally, having faith helps me make it through each day. Sure, there are temptations that will always come after me, but in the long run, faith is the only thing that can stand during rain or hail storms. I learned that this is unbreakable.

A military spouse who has to raise children, work and even go to school like I am doing, should be proud. We are supporting our active-duty spouses during their times of crisis.

In fact, we are supporting our country just as much as they are. We raise our children and take care of business, protect our homes and assist our neighbors.

We are proud, for we learn that we are the backbone of the military.



NUCLEUS

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58th SOW commander proud of his people

BY STAFF SGT. LAURA HOLZER
58th Special Operations Wing
Public Affairs

After 27 years of service to the Air Force and nation, the 58th Special Operations Wing commander will relinquish command April 25. His retirement ceremony will follow afterwards, both taking place in Hangar 1000.

Col. Michael Byers admitted he had mixed feelings about leaving the service.

"I'm an Air Force brat. I went to the Air Force Academy for four years and served for 27 years. I've been in the Air Force all my life," he said. "It's time to try something different and I'm excited about that, but at the same time I'm a little nervous because it's unknown territory."

As the 58th SOW commander, Byers is responsible for more than 1,400 people assigned to the wing. The wing trains 2,200 students annually and provides mission-ready special operations, rescue, missile site support and UH-1 DV airlift aircrews for the Air Force.

During his two years in command, the wing has overcome many challenges. A contractor strike drastically hindered training and, after the events

of Sept. 11, operational requirements rose. In addition the wing deployed maintenance and aircrew to the Philippines and Afghanistan for the global war on terrorism and most recently, to combat operations in Iraq.

Through these times, the wing accomplished its primary mission and even took the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

"It's such a great achievement," said Byers. "It shows what a great team can do and what great people we have here in the wing. All I can say to them is thank you. Thank you for letting me be a part of this team."

However, Kirtland AFB hasn't seen the last of Byers. He and his wife, Barbara, are staying in the local area. After some relaxation time, they will continue to support the Air Force, Kirtland AFB and the 58th SOW any way they can.

"I'll miss flying and being part of the action here," he said. "It's been a privilege to serve with the men and women of the 58th Special Operations Wing. I'm in debt to them forever for their loyalty and support. Barbara and I wish them success in all their endeavors and I want to thank them for making the 58th SOW such a great organization."

58th SOW changes leadership April 25

Col. Michael B. Byers, 58th Special Operations Wing commander, relinquishes command in a ceremony April 25, 9 a.m., in Hangar 1000 on the west side of Kirtland AFB.

Col. Eric E. Fiel, formerly of the Aviation Tactics and Evaluation Group at Fort Bragg, N.C., will take command.



Col. Michael Byers, 50th Special Operations Wing commander

AETC commander announces 2003 Family Day holidays

Gen. Don Cook, Air Education and Training Command commander, announced dates the command will observe as family days. The days are: July 3, Nov. 28, Dec. 26 and Jan. 2, 2004.

Family days off for the Air Force Materiel Command are: May 23, July 3, Aug. 29 and Nov. 28.

Family day means military members assigned to units in the respective commands will get the day off, giving most people an extended holiday break. In his announcement, Cook stated the days are in appreciation for the remarkable undertakings of the command's people.

If you have questions about the days off, check with your supervisor, who will determine mission-essential staffing. For military members required to perform duty on the family down day, commanders are encouraged to grant compensatory time off during the first week following the

holiday, mission requirements permitting.

Air Force Instruction 36-3003, "Military Leave Program," should be followed regarding passes and chargeable leave. Under current rules for DoD civilians, commanders can encourage liberal leave, use of previously earned compensatory time or use of already approved time-off awards. Group time-off awards, specifically for the purpose of giving the day off, are prohibited by Air Force Instruction, 36-1004, "Managing the Civilian Recognition Program."

"During your holiday activities, please think safety first," Cook said. "Use common sense, drive defensively and wear your safety belts."

Cook also stated that commanders and supervisors must provide a safety briefing to their personnel to ensure they understand that risk management should be used on and off duty.



Photo by James Janis, NMVAHCS

VA Health Care System honors former POWs

The Kirtland AFB Honor Guard presents the colors during the singing of our National Anthem at the New Mexico Veterans Affairs Health Care System's Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, April 9. Former prisoners of war Jack Smith and Ray Larribas addressed the audience and Vietnam veteran and retired VA social worker Eli E. Lopez served as the keynote speaker.

Jabara Award honors chopper pilots' efforts

U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. (AFPN) — Two Air Force helicopter pilots have earned the 2003 Col. James Jabara Award for Airmanship.

Majs. Leighton Anderson and Edward Lengel, both 1992 academy graduates, earned the award for their

contributions to airpower during Operation Enduring Freedom.

This is the first time the award has been given to more than one graduate since 1988. The award is named in honor of Jabara, America's first jet ace, and given annually to an Air Force Academy graduate whose actions, directly associated with an aerospace vehicle, set him or her apart from contemporaries.

Anderson is an MH-53M Pave Low III helicopter pilot who used a "radar altitude hold technique" he developed to land during an Operation Enduring Freedom mission.

During attempts to extract a special forces team from a narrow, high-altitude landing zone, several helicopters had been unable to land because the area was obscured

with dust. Anderson arrived and used his technique to land in the dust-out conditions and retrieve the troops.

Lengel, an MH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter pilot, navigated hostile territory in Afghanistan during Operation Anaconda to evacuate wounded soldiers.

While waiting for his pararescuemen to return to the helicopter, enemy troops fired several explosive rounds at the helicopter.

Lengel directed AC-130 gunships to quell the hostile fire, allowing his pararescuemen to load four wounded soldiers onto the helicopter.

Now overloaded and flying in high-altitude conditions, Lengel piloted his helicopter 10 feet above the ground and down a dry streambed until he was able to gain sufficient airspeed to get airborne.